

TALES FROM THE KINGDOM - AN ANCIENT BOOKWORM'S TALE

My tale starts at the end of my row, the local Baron's row I mean, where stood a jousting field that had seen better times....



I was just a bairn when the two met for the first time. It was atop of a hill where the field had been prepared. In by-gone times the field had seen a big joust and 11,645 paying subjects had watched that day. Very sad, but those with picnics in-hand that had travelled from afar, won the colours! The locals went back to their coalmines....and when I say their mines, I jest.

They in no way owned the 10 mines that surrounded the village. But all those men, and many of their wenches, worked so hard in those blood-filled pits.

The village lay in a Kingdom that in past-times had been in serious need of some bridges. Ancient bookworms and their craftsmen had worked for a century on their respective tasks, both to the north and the south of this land. With their magical skills, they conjured up such magnificence that no king or queen in any other land in the universe had ever seen – bar just the one mistake that is!

The Queen's ferry crossing is therefore no more.....but The Queensferry Crossing is? *(See Brenda's winning comp image on bridges.)*



It was, and still is, a Kingdom of palaces and castles; with a town of ancient ruins; a home of golf; and a place for bookworms to learn the ways of the universe (and a prince, the future king, and his lady to get together). But the villages I tell tale of, lay to the west of this Kingdom, and on that summer's day, how the rain did pour down from the heavens. As it was then, and is now – it just always seems the casewell nearly always. *(Photoshop in the rain as you see fit.)*



The future field general of his country, this country that I'm now in, and that had celebrated so much in '66, met for a practice joust on the hilltop that day.

Strange as though this may seem.

(No photoshop applied here.)

Oh how I wish I could have captured an image of that play, but my nappy probably needed changing. Besides my world was at my mother's bare feet and not the hundred yards distant. *(Can you picture it? Ragged Victorians... nearly. Remember there was no autofocus in olden times. The sunny setting would have been useless that day, and most days for that matter - it was summer in the Kingdom.)*





The young apprentice was initially overjoyed at leaving the Kingdom for the castle at Leeds, far far to the south. To the future field general he did go, but returned homesick after a single cycle of the moon. (I for one canny blame him, for the subjects of the Kingdom are like nae other.)

A day would come however. The day when both would joust again, and **David** of the **Coleman** Clan would utter those oft remembered words: "*Porterfield one nil.*" The Leeds field general, **Sir Don Revie**, and the now master of his trade, **Sir Ian**, had met again. A long way from the Kingdom that's true, but a kingdom of another kind, for certain. There was magic afoot that Wembley day, a match to rival any that have tackled quidditch: the apprentice and his merry men became masters; the gobsmacked subjects witnessed the fall of a goliath, as truly never seen before; the greatest clean sheet of all time when **Sir Peter** (Lorimar of Scotland that is) missed the goal! Magic at play, I say. All hail **Sir Jim Montgomery**, a true master of wizardry.



This tale is only just beginning. When I tell you that **Sir Ian** had, in truth, replaced the champion from the neighbouring hill in the Kingdom. A champion from the North like no other, before or since. A legend in the Kingdom who had jousted on that same Wembley field in '63 and again in '67, all to elevate his merry men to jousting champions of the universe.

Back in '63 he had single-handedly taken on the scoring role, and would have bagged a hat-trick by putting one in his own goal if given a chance, i.e. when there would be only a couple of minutes left for the Knights to be on the field, obviously. Now that would have been immortality in the North.

From his Beith hill in the Kingdom he was truly the champion of all that he could see.

When **Sir Bobby** had cleaned his hands before meeting his Queen that day in '66, little did he know that **Sir Jim** would want to relieve him of all his well-won worldly trophies. The **Sirs Bobby** and **Nobby's** cheer that Wembley day was immediately after a **Mr Wolstenholme** had been heard to say "*Some people are on the pitch. They think it's all over. It is now.*"





— Where is the Russian linesman?

It truly happened. Only an unbeaten year later for **Sir Bobby** and his field general, **Sir Alf**, that that joust was just so one-sided for the 40,000 skirt-clad, merry subjects from the North. It wasn't a dream borne out of too much merriment after all. How those gallant Knights had won the day with their well-practiced jousts; how **Sir Slim Jim** had played keepie-uppie in taunt, much to the dismay of **Sir Dennis**.

Sir Jim, a true jouster and jester.

It came to pass that the merry skirt-clad subjects, in the years to come, would love the place so much that they would journey home with great big dollops of it..... sorry about that.

For me, in the Baron's row of houses, I just loved the sunsets over the Hill-of-Beith looking straight down the cobbled (*Photoshop applied*) street and over to the hill to the west. In the valley between, first pierced the mines, then came the opencast, and now rows of fairways dotted with greens. Only three miles of separation but how some things change. The scoundrels in my street always practiced their street-jousting, a scourge to some, but I was always keen to join in. Only occasionally did we have to think about the horse and cart deliveries, so our street-practice went on till the sun was well over the Beith. Occasionally we would take to the top of the row and practice our jumping over fences and flowers to the prepared jousting field.



Just as those eleven thousand had journeyed the decades before. Definitely a scourge to the miner's wenchens and their gardens, but especially to the groundsman that sorted out the turf after the slide tackles that we had speared on each other.



In truth, our village had a reputation across the North for coal and more coal, but also for one other thing. It was a thing of torture that all wee waifs and strays feared, and where all who learned their lessons came to feel at some stage. It was sooner rather than later, for some!

The Tawes: aka **the belt** to all recipients.



Truly, many thanks Mr Dick you.....(Great shop by the way, but you never ever had the belt in your shop windows! I wonder why?)

Not the birch or the cane, not even ye stocks of olde – but a bloody great leather belt to your oh so soft hands. Designed to enact the maximum havoc on such young and delicate skin – given to all those **not** learning their lessons across the land. Oh how you would smart but not cry.....This device was something that a latter-day Harry Potter would have cast his magic spell on. It turned all who tasted it into bookworms, and for most of the most, they just couldn't wait to escape its fire.

By the time **Sir Ian** was doing his thing on Wembley field, the fate of yours truly had been foretold by the bare foot lady of some wisdom. My goose was being well and truly cooked! Endure Mr Dick's leather to the very last and go directly across the big bridge until you get doffed - 4 more years!!!! (*Seriously, I'm not like **The Donald**.*) Harry and his magician pals were later to emerge from those cafes, just around the corner, and there was I, book-worming and jousting etc etc.

Afterwards, it was back across the bridge, book-worming completed (*yeah right*) with more than a handful of jousting trophies. How my family mocked and ridiculed the plastic trinkets – since one or two of the Clan were the real deal. (*My sis is a bit of a WAG you see.*)



In time, it came to pass that when **Bjørge Lillelien** screamed out in total joy “*Maggie Thatcher, can you hear me? Maggie Thatcher, your boys took a hell of a beating.*” it was not just the jousts from the North that could take the day. Those from across the oil-platformed waters, in the lands of ice and snow, could as well.

Well it turns out that the daughter of the merchant was indeed listening, and she was not for turning - soft that is. For she had decided that the conditions down the mines were just too bad, and the subjects would no longer need to have blackened faces.....etc etc. Oh how the subjects from the Valleys; the near, as well as the far North; just loved her. (*Nowadays just apply Nik Silver Efex.*)



It turned out that, in order not to have a blackened face as such, it would be another four years minimum for this serf: toil by day; and even more book-worming at night. It was not enough just to be doffed. A serf to be set free on bridges needs a parchment written in ye olde hand - written from the distant land near Wembley Way, or even just around the corner from the Merchant daughter's olde stomping ground – you get the geography... Well my jousting continued all this time, all in order to keep this body slim. (*For reflection purposes, I now apply a few Photoshop layers at this bit, including puppet warp please.*)

Just as the final test needed to be passed for the parchment to be written, a sneaky, sly olde knight did herald my time for a trial. Twice I did say nay to his summons. To joust and receive gold sounded tempting, but I was within touching distance of that parchment ...after almost eight years! Focus required. My focus was very sharp you understand, no gaussian blur applied - at all. (*No Photoshop here, but that sly olde knight and his team of jousts just went on live TV at the end of the season and bloody won the silver goblet of the Nation! Just brilliant ye olde plonker!*) (*Should I have applied the clarity slider back then? What if ?.....*)





To end this too too long a tale, all I can say is that the sly olde knight did not pay a sneaky third visit. (*Maybe he did of course? Dehaze required....*)

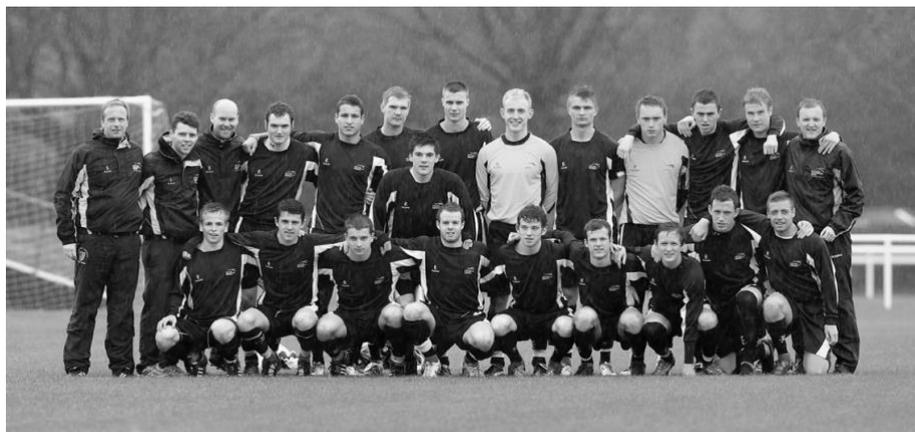
I spent my weekdays building bridges and my weekends trying to focus on those jousts – manually focusing on the jousts in the gloomy cold of the weather up North, that is. Playing drawing board meccano was much more comfortable.

After many years now, the Wembley tales from any celebrated jousts up North have, however, all but vanished – not such a magic trick for us grey beards.



Verily, it has come to pass, that I now present to you the fusion of a schooling in film on cold Northern jousting fields, with a now Hogwarts level of digital magic (*ie Philosopher's Stone level*), and the book-wormers of a generation or two later ... the **Class of 2012**.

Greybeard



References:

1. Season 47/48:
3,000 fans came. An all-time junior record crowd of 11,645 assembled at Gardiner's Park.
2. Long Span Bridges into the Kingdom:
 - a) Tay Bridge Mk I (Rail) – 1878 to1879
 - b) Tay Bridge Mk II (Rail) – 1887, to present thankfully.
 - c) Forth Bridge - 1890
 - d) Kingcardine Bridge – 1936
 - e) Forth Road Bridge – 1964
 - f) Tay Road Bridge – 1966
 - g) Clackmannanshire Bridge – 2008
 - h) Queensferry Crossing – 2017.
3. Don Revie OBE – Player/Manager of Leeds United FC. England manager 1974 – 1977.
4. Ian Porterfield – Raith Rovers, FA Cup Winner 1973 (Leeds v Sunderland). Manager at Aberdeen following the departure of Sir Alex Ferguson to Man U. First manager in the English Premier League to be sacked – by Chelsea FC.
5. Jim Baxter – Raith Rovers, Glasgow Rangers, Scotland. Legend.
6. Other Football Greats – Peter Lorimar, Jim Montgomery, Bobby Moore, Bobby Charlton, Nobby Stiles, Sir Alf Ramsey, Dennis Law. Legends all.
7. John J. Dick – hometown maker and exporter of fine straps, aka the tawes, **the belt** – the implement of torture.
8. David Coleman, Kenneth Wolstenholme DFC & Bar, Bjørge Lillelien – commentary one liners of some note, with a war hero thrown in.
9. Merchant's daughter – Margaret Hilda Thatcher, Baroness Thatcher – UK Prime Minister.
10. Harry Potter – via the café/streets of Edinburgh etc, curtesy of J.K. Rowling.
11. England v Scotland – BUCS April 2012

DICK THE SADDLER

*Tell me, Dick the saddler, purveyor of pain,
what was your reason, what was your gain?*

*Was it the money, or a secret delight,
at the thought of the children who stood there in fright,
awaiting the pain your piece of leather delivered?*

*Unhappy children, who stood there and shivered,
at the thought that Authority, at times without cause,
delivered its justice with your Lochgelly tawse.*

